

Hazardous Wastes A Grave Threat, Chemist Warns

BY SUE MacDONALD
Enquirer Hamilton Bureau

HAMILTON—A University of Cincinnati chemist Thursday described the Chem-Dyne plant in Hamilton as the "best worst example of how not to dispose of hazardous wastes" and compared it to New York's Love Canal because of its potential human health problems.

Speaking at a hazardous waste seminar at the Miami University Hamilton campus, chemistry professor Harry Mark said the types of chemicals that were brought into the Chem-Dyne plant and are now buried near the plant may pose a threat as serious as the Love Canal in Niagara Falls, N.Y., where residents have been evacuated from houses built on a former chemical landfill.

"The contention that you have no Love Canal in Ohio is ridiculous," Mark said. "You have one right here in your backyard. I think it is fitting that we are sitting here in Hamilton talking about hazardous wastes," he said in his opening remarks.

MARKS, WHO headed a court-ordered team to inventory wastes at Chem-Dyne, claimed former operators of the firm buried chemicals near a city park in the North end, chemicals that "slowly but surely will seep" out of the ground if the containers in which they are stored break down.

Should that happen, Marks said the only solution would be to dig up the chemicals to a depth of 60 feet—a solution that probably would be economically unfeasible.

Marks and the four panelists who participated in the seminar agreed that the costs of dealing with the tons of hazardous wastes created by Ohio manufacturers each year will be staggering.

• Philip Watson, president of a progressive liquid treatment company in Xenia, said the technology and research that deal with landfilling, storing, burning and treating hazardous wastes is in an "embryonic stage" that will be triggered by recent guidelines handed down as part of implementing the Congressional Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

The experience at Chem-Dyne "really woke me up and shook me up" to the seriousness of the disposal of hazardous wastes, he told the audience of about 30 persons.

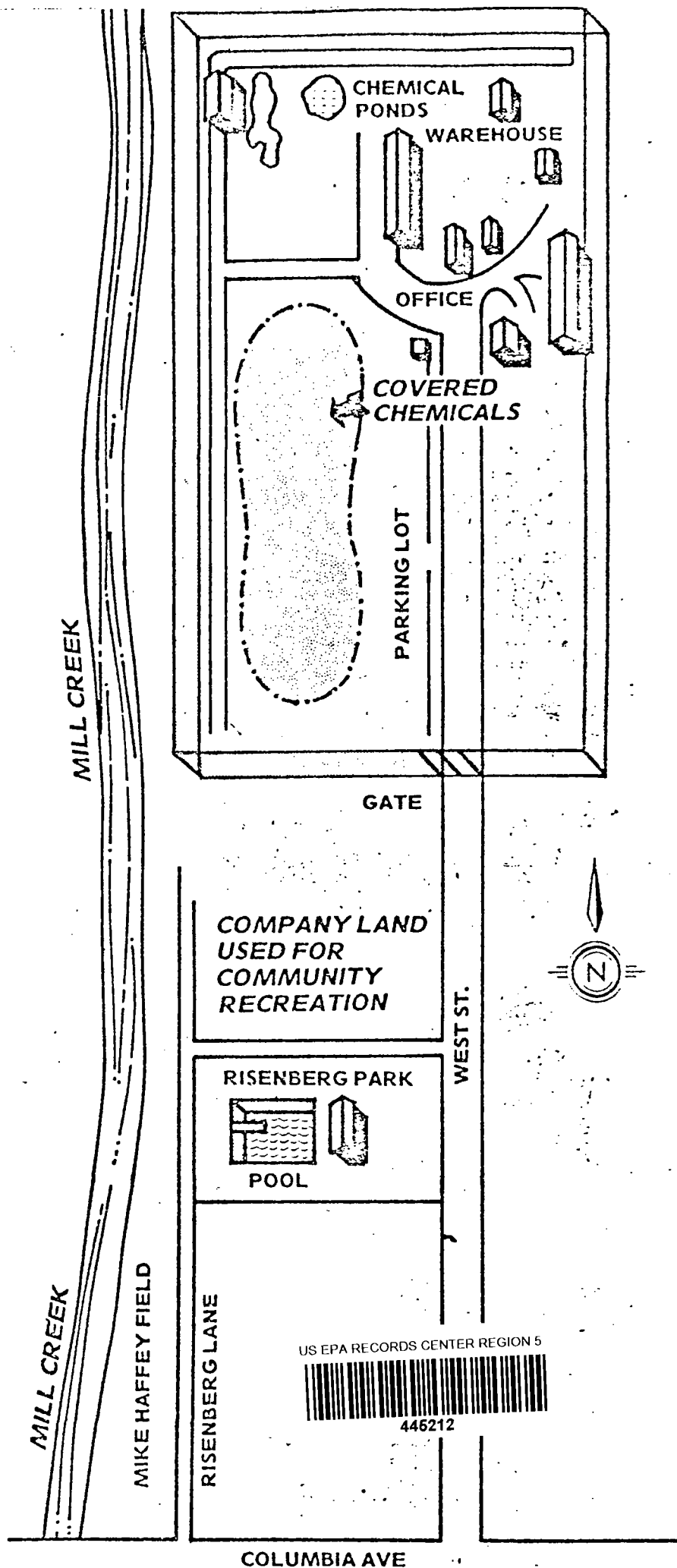
• John Barker, chief of environmental engineering at Armco Inc. in Middletown, said his firm began a year ago to inventory its wastes in anticipation of the recently distributed guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency about the recovery act.

Because the guidelines give Ohio industries only 90 days to register with the government the types of wastes they generate, Barker predicted there will be "an awful lot of screaming, rendering of cloth and tearing of hair by industries that have not begun this inventory."

• Paula Cotter, staff member of the Ohio EPA hazardous materials section, said Ohio soon must face the problem of deciding where to store hazardous wastes because "rural areas are strongly opposed to taking cities' wastes."

She agreed with Watson's contention that 70% of the liquid wastes now generated in Ohio can be pre-treated safely with present technology.

Barker said federal officials at a recent Washington conference estimated that the cost of dealing with the nationwide problem of hazardous waste disposal may equal the amount of money already spent by air and water pollution measures in the last decade.



POISONOUS WASTES: Poisonous industrial wastes are buried near Reading recreation areas, according to a map prepared for state officials. The map is duplicated above. The wastes may be stored under property of Carstab Corp., the former Cincinnati Milacron Chemical Inc.